
Cork entrepreneur helping food businesses thrive

Noreen O’Connell is an expert in the food industry and will be discussing her career and businesses at the Friday Breakfast Club event in Cork on October 4th.

Noreen’s story

I am involved in two companies - [Biawiz Ltd](#) is my management consultancy business. I work with food businesses on strategy, innovation, portfolio management, governance and scaling their operations, brands and supply chains for global markets. I work with clients across all sectors on strategy, organisation, talent and succession.

I am also the founder and a director of [Bia-Biz](#), a ‘Best of the Web’ directory of free resources for the food industry. The directory includes 100 food trainings, 50 people skills trainings, a regulatory catalogue for 113 countries, a global conferences calendar, instructional toolkits and training videos, and 2,100 web links of categorised content for all food sectors and businesses. We also have a YouTube channel and Facebook page.

Having worked in international executive roles for many years, I wanted to develop a portal where food companies could find the information and training they need to be successful. While companies are unique and markets differ, the operating framework and challenges faced by companies are similar. With the growth in the worlds population, the focus on food for health, the

increasing complexity of the industry and the high product failure rate and the demands of every job, means it is difficult for people in the food industry to take time out for training or to search for the right materials and practices.

Achievements to date

As our website is a holistic platform for the food industry, which we spent two years developing. Minister Creed launched the website in April 2018 and we focused on Ireland in year one. This year we are focusing on building followers in India, the US and China and connecting with key food authorities globally.

Networking

I participate primarily in food and agri related events to understand the challenges faced by manufacturers. This is a great way to meet people and make them aware of our free resource.

Finance

Our website is a time heavy rather than a capital-intensive business, so we didn't need any lending. All four directors also have other businesses.

Cashflow

Our spend is low as we are a time intensive business. In phase three, when we have a sufficient following, we will sell adds appropriate to each section of the site (to generate cashflow).

Mentorship

As bia-biz.com is unique, it was very difficult to benchmark, much of the benchmarking was in the ICT sector. We designed our organisation to have the key skills covered by the company directors.

Role models

In my late 20s, I had an amazing boss who created a productive work environment and great work culture. In both my work and personal life, I am passionate about food, especially areas like gut health, the gut-brain axis, food for health and immunology. There are many role models in this space amongst them UCC's and APC Microbiome.

Challenges and the future

Staying current with what's happening globally in food and science so that our website reflects this can be a challenge in a world of infobesity. Moving from a corporate environment to becoming an entrepreneur was challenging and exciting, but having a network of trusted advisors has been invaluable. Our vision for bia-biz.com is to empower those who feed the world, so success for us is to support companies and individuals around the world through our site.

Advice

Prioritise skills and competency building and seek out roles where you can grow, develop and be inspired.

[To attend the Friday Breakfast Club in the Bank of Ireland Workbench in Cork, click here to register.](#)

Friday Breakfast Clubs are events held every first Friday in Bank of Ireland's Workbenches across the country. The first 30 minutes involves business networking over a light breakfast. This is followed by a fireside chat with a local business owner with a financial focus on the story of their journey to date, in a relaxed conversational setting, closing with Q&A with the audience. Noreen O'Connell will be chatting to Bank of Ireland bank manager Alan Carroll at the next event.

Written by [Stephen Larkin](#)

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